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⑳ Fire retardant polystyrene insulating board.

㉑ The invention relates to a method of forming fire retardant insulation material from foam plastic consisting of polystyrene beads, comminuted rigid plastic foam scrap, and mixtures thereof, comprising:

(a) preparing a moldable mixture of said foam plastic with a heat-foamable thermosetting resin composition, the resin component of said composition being selected from the class consisting of phenol-formaldehyde and melamine-formaldehyde resins, said resin being in resole form and containing a blowing agent and a surfactant, from 5 to 150 parts by volume of said resin being present per 100 parts of said foam plastic in said mix; and

(b) applying dielectric heating to portions of said moldable mixture in enclosed molds to obtain integrated molded bodies composed of resin encapsulated beads or scrap pieces, said dielectric heating being effective for rapidly foaming said resin and curing it to a predominantly closed cell structure surrounding said beads or scrap pieces.

EP 0 237 596 A1

FIRE RETARDANT POLYSTYRENE INSULATING BOARD

FIELD OF INVENTION

The field of the invention relates to expanded polystyrene insulation material, and more particularly to insulation material produced from admixtures of expandable polystyrene beads with binders or fillers.

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

Polystyrene is produced in an expandable granular form referred to as polystyrene "beads". The beads have a closed cellular structure and contain an expanding agent such as pentane. The beads may be formed into integrated bodies, such as sheets or slabs, by a molding process in which steam and heat and applied to cause the beads to soften, expand, and integrate. In most applications, the beads are subjected to a pre-expansion before being formed into the molded bodies, the beads being only partially expanded during the pre-treatment. Polystyrene insulating board as presently produced from such beads usually does not contain any additional binders or fillers. However, the patent literature contains some descriptions of such composites. See, for example, U.S. Patents 3,151,604; 3,251,916; and 4,079,170.

In the process described in patent 3,151,604, pre-expanded polystyrene beads are combined with a thermoplastic polymeric bonding agent that is adapted to flow at a temperature lower than the expansion temperature range of the beads. This mixture is mechanically preformed at a temperature at which the thermoplastic is flowable but below a temperature at which the beads expand. Thereafter, the pre-formed mass is subjected to heat to expand the beads.

The United States patent 3,241,916 discloses the formation of composite bodies from expanded polystyrene and a polyurethane binder. Other disclosed bonding agents include drying oils, varnishes, and rubber latex gels, which are to be used together with the polyurethane. The polystyrene beads are expanded before being mixed with the binder. Patent 4,079,170 describes the impregnation of a pre-formed sheet of expanded polystyrene with a wax composition, liquified wax being forced into the sheet under pressure and hardened by cooling.

One of the known disadvantages of expanded polystyrene insulation is that it is a flammable material which can contribute to fire spreading. The incorporation of fire retardant chemical has been proposed but such chemicals increase the cost of the insulating material. Further, the incorporation of fire retardant chemicals may interfere with the self-bonding of the polystyrene beads during the manufacture of the board, thereby reducing the mechanical strength of the insulation and increasing its friability. Heretofore, no method has been proposed whereby the fire resistance of polystyrene bead insulation can be appreciably increased at minimal additional cost, and with substantial improvement in other desirable properties.

The manufacture of polystyrene insulating board by integration and expansion of polystyrene beads without the use of a binder results in molded board products requiring shaping by trimming. Large quantities of such trimmings, referred to as "polystyrene scrap", accumulate as a waste by-product in connection with polystyrene board manufacturing operations. It is employed to some extent as a packaging material, and other uses are being sought. Most of the polystyrene scrap is understood to be disposed of by burning.

Foam plastic scrap is also available from other sources. Foam plastic bodies which are molded and then cut or trimmed are made from a number of other plastics besides polystyrene. These include polystyrene-polyethylene copolymers, polyethylene, acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS) copolymers, polyurethane, polypropylene epoxy, polyvinylchloride, polyimides, and silicones. All of these foamed waste materials have relatively little use at present and tend to be materials of low fire retardancy.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

This invention relates to a method of manufacturing fire retarding insulation material from expandable polystyrene beads which contain a heat-activatable expanding agent. For the purpose of in situ encapsulation of the beads, a premix of the polystyrene beads is formed with a heat-foamable thermo-setting resin composition. The preferred resins are phenol-formaldehyde and/or melamine-formaldehyde resins. After

forming of the premix, it is subjected to heating in enclosed molds to obtain integrated molded bodies composed of resin-encapsulated polystyrene beads. At the time of molding, the beads are in partially expanded condition and are capable of further expansion on the application of heat. The heating during molding is at temperatures effective for concurrently foaming the resin and expanding the beads.

5 The resulting molded bodies, which may be in the form of sheets or slabs, have greatly improved fire retardant properties, as determined by the standard flame spread test. The limiting oxygen index is also improved. Further, although the cost per cubic foot for insulating material of the same density generally corresponds with that of polystyrene beads alone, other important properties are appreciably improved, including a reduction in thermal conductivity and major improvement with respect to dimensional change
10 under varying temperatures.

The method of this invention can also be applied to polystyrene scrap, which may be used alone or in admixture with polystyrene beads, or in admixture with other plastic foam scrap materials. The fire retardancy advantages of this invention can be obtained with respect to these other plastic foam materials which are available as trimmings referred to herein as "scrap".

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Expandable polystyrene in granular or so-called "bead" form is available commercially. For example, 20 such beads are sold under the trademark name "Styropor" by BASF Wyandotte Corporation, Wyandotte, Michigan. The Styropor beads are impregnated with a foaming agent which on application of heat acts to expand the beads. Such expandable polystyrene beads and their method of production and use are further described in patents issued to BASF or a related corporation, including U.S. patents 4,243,717; 4,369,227; and 3,661,810, while various expanding agents may be incorporated in the closed-cell polystyrene beads, 25 such as those commonly used for foaming plastic resins, the commercial foaming agent is commonly pentane.

As sold, the unexpanded polystyrene beads are capable on the application of heat of providing a volumetric expansion of 20 to 25-fold. The expanding process, as described in the cited references, involves the use of direct steam heating. Typically, the beads are subjected to a pre-expansion in a mixer- 30 type apparatus into which the steam is introduced, the extent of the expansion being controlled so that the resulting pre-expanded beads are still capable of further expansion. For the purpose of the present invention, the styrene beads are used in a form wherein they expand by heat but are preferably in the partially expanded form now employed for the molding of insulating material. For example, the unexpanded styrene beads as supplied by the manufacturer may be expanded by from 50 to 90% of their total expansion volume before being formed into the molding mix of the present invention. The beads preferably 35 should be capable of a volumetric expansion of at least from 10 to 50% with reference to their volume as incorporated in the molding mix.

The pre-expanded beads may range in diameter from about 1 to 5 millimeters (mm). Preferably an admixture of large and small beads is used, such as from 10 to 30 parts by weight of small beads of 1 to 40 2 mm per 100 parts of large beads of from 3 to 5 mm.

Another starting material for the method of this invention is referred to as "polystyrene scrap". This consists of trimmings obtained in the manufacture of polystyrene board by the integration of expandable polystyrene beads without a binder. Most of the trimmings are in the form of strips, chunks, etc. In the first step of the process, the polystyrene scrap is comminuted to reduce it to pieces of smaller size. For 45 example, the polystyrene scrap may be ground in a hammer mill to pieces having a maximum diameter of less than one inch. A mix of pieces of varying sizes is useable, that is, a high degree of size uniformity is not required. A suitable general size range comprises pieces having a maximum diameter within the range from about 1/8 to 3/4 inches. The polystyrene beads will have been expanded in the process of making the polystyrene board from which the scrap is obtained. The polystyrene of the scrap material may still be 50 subject to some further expansion, but this property while desirable is not essential for the purposes of this invention.

Other rigid foam plastic scrap material which may be used in admixture with the polystyrene foam scrap or in some cases as a substitute for the polystyrene foam scrap include foam products prepared from polystyrene-polyethylene copolymers, polyethylene (high, medium and low densities), acrylonitrile-butadi- 55 ene styrene (ABS) copolymer, polyurethane, polypropylene epoxy, polyvinylchloride, polyimides and silicones. Scrap material formed from these plastics, however, is available in lesser quantities than polystyrene scrap, and would ordinarily be employed in admixture with polystyrene scrap, the admixture containing 50% by volume or more of the polystyrene scrap in relation to the other foam scrap ingredients.

The other primary ingredient of the fire retarding insulation material of this invention is a heat-foamable thermosetting resin composition. The resin component is preferably a phenol-formaldehyde resin, a melamine-formaldehyde resin or mixtures thereof such as 4 parts by weight of the phenolic resin to 1 part of the melamine resin. These resins are preferably employed in the form of resols, that is, A-stage resins.

- 5 The resols are water soluble and contain a predominance of methylol groups. However, resolites or B-stage resins can also be employed which are capable of being cured to the final C-stage resite polymers. Such phenolic and melamine resins are available commercially in the form of resols. For example, phenol-formaldehyde resols are sold by Clark Chemical Corp., Blue Island, Illinois, by Ashland Chemical Company, Columbus, Ohio, and others. Suitable melamine-formaldehyde resins in the form of resols are available
10 commercially from the Melamine Division of Ashland Chemical Company. The volume of resin to pre-expanded beads in the molding mix may range from 5 to 75 parts resin to 100 parts beads. Preferred proportions are from 10 to 50 parts of the resin per 100 parts by volume of the partially expanded beads.

- The resin composition in addition to the resin as described above preferably also includes a blowing or foaming agent, a catalyst, and a surfactant. For examples, the blowing agent may be trichlorofluoromethane
15 (Freon 11), trichlorotrifluoromethane (Freon 113), n-pentane, or methylene chloride; the catalyst may be phenolsulfonic acid or toluene sulfonic acid; and the surfactant may be sorbitan monooleate with 20 moles ethylene oxide, sorbitan monolaurate with 20 moles oxide, or comparable surfactant.

Examples of preferred thermosetting resin compositions are as follows:

Formula A

<u>Ingredients</u>	<u>Wt. %</u>
Phenolic resin (resol)	80
25 Sorbitan monooleate with 20 moles of ethylene oxide	4
Freon 11	8
30 Phenol sulfonic acid (65% w/w as PSA)	8

Formula B

<u>Ingredients</u>	<u>Wt. %</u>
Melamine formaldehyde resin	82
40 Sorbitan monolaurate with 20 moles of ethylene oxide	2.5
Freon 11	5.8
45 Freon 113	2.5
Phenolisulfonic acid (65% w/w as PSA)	7.2

- 50 The thermosetting resin will comprise the major ingredient of the resin composition. In combining the resin composition with the polystyrene beads, the resin content can range from 5 to 75 parts by volume of resin per 100 parts of the polystyrene beads. A preferred range is from 10 to 50 parts of the resin per 100 parts by volume of the beads.

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In the preparation of fire resistant molded products from polystyrene scrap, it may be desirable to employ larger proportions of resin to scrap such as as much as from 100 to 150 parts of resin by volume per 100 parts of scrap. The overall proportions for the method, including polystyrene beads, mixtures of beads and polystyrene scrap, or polystyrene scrap or other foam plastic scrap, extend from as little as 5 parts by volume of resin to as much as 150 parts by volume of resin per 100 parts of polystyrene beads. Typically, however, the proportions will be within the range from 10 to 100 parts of resin by volume per 100 parts of the foam plastic material.

Usually it would be preferable to preform the resin composition, combining the resin, surfactant, blowing agent and catalyst and then combining this composition with the polystyrene beads. Since the resin composition will be in liquid form, it may be admixed with the beads in a mixer apparatus, such as paddle mixers, or screw conveyors providing a mixing-kneading action. The resulting premix of the beads and resin provides a moldable mixture, which can be formed into sheets, slabs, and the like for use as insulating material. The moldcomposition is preferably used as prepared in a continuous operation, but the molding composition can be held at room temperature for 30 to 60 minutes if necessary prior to molding.

In the molding operation, the molding composition is charged to molds, such as rectilinear molds, which are provided with heating means. After the molds are closed and locked to withstand pressure, heat is applied, such as by dielectric heating means. In general, the temperature employed in the molding operation should be sufficient to foam the resin composition, expand the beads, and cure the resin. Temperatures of from 100 to 150°F will usually be sufficient for the molding operation. The molding time will vary with the heating means, but where dielectric heating is employed, molding times of as short as from 10 to 60 seconds. During the molding operation, the resin further polymerizes, reaching the final C-stage of resin polymerization. In the final product, the resin substantially fills the void spaces between the polystyrene beads effectively coating or "encapsulating" the beads, such as the preferred mixture of large and small beads as described above.

In a representative manufacturing operation, two sizes of polystyrene beads are contained in feed hoppers. The beads have been pre-expanded by contact with heat, being expanded from their original volume by about 2000% and being capable of further expansion of about 25%. For example, the small beads may have an average size of about 1-2 mm, and the large beads an average size of about 4-5 mm. The feeding of the beads can be proportioned so that from about 1 part of the small beads are combined with 4 parts by volume of the large beads. The intermixed beads can be fed by means of a screw conveyor to an intermediate section into which there is introduced the resin composition, which has been formed by intermixing the phenolic or melamine resin with a surfactant, blowing agent, and catalyst. For example, Formulas A and B as set out above can be used. The resin composition can be fed into the beads at a rate providing on the basis of the resin content of the composition 20-30 parts of resin per 70-80 parts by volume of the mixed beads. After the introduction of the resin, the beads and resin can be further kneaded and mixed by a screw conveyor. The resulting molding composition is discharged into a storage bin.

In the molding operation sequence, the molding mixture from the storage bin can be supplied to a mold through a suitable feed chute. It is spread and leveled in the mold, and then the mold is closed and clamped. Heat is applied by means of dielectric heating elements. The frequencies used may range from 25 to 30 megahertz (mhz) at a power level of 1 to 5 kilowatts (kw). The internal temperature of the mold mixture during the molding operation can range from about 120 to 150°F. On completion of the molding operation, the mold is opened and the molded slab of insulation board is removed.

During the molding operation, if desired, various substrates may be adhesively attached to the upper and/or lower surfaces of the molded slabs. For example, the upper layer may comprise wood fiberboard impregnated with asphalt and the lower facing layer pressed wood. A wide variety of other facing materials can be used, including aluminum foil, wood, sheet rock, steel, cardboard, fabric, fiberboard, fiberglass, etc.

EXPERIMENTAL EXAMPLES

A. Polystyrene Beads

For the purpose of testing the properties of insulation material prepared by the method of this invention, samples were prepared from a phenol-formaldehyde resin and pre-expanded polystyrene beads as follows: (1) 25% resin with 75% beads, and (2) 35% resin with 65% beads. These percentages are by volume and relate to the mix prior to molding. A resin composition like Formula A above was mixed with partially expanded polystyrene beads comprising about 80% by volume of 4-5 mm beads with 20% of 1-2 mm beads, which were capable of being expanded 20-25%. The molding mixture was charged to molds

equipped with dielectric heating means and molded therein into rectangular blocks using a molding temperature of approximately 125-150°F. Specimens from each of the mold mixtures were then tested for physical properties. The results are summarized below in Table A, which includes a comparison with a standard commercial polystyrene board. The phenolic resin used was a resol resin supplied by Clark Chemical Company as resin CR-3588 (70-80% solids; 1.23-1.26 specific gravity; 1000-2000 cps viscosity, 7-8 pH; 70-90 seconds Stroke cure; 200-300 second gel; and 9-12% water). As shown in Table A, the encapsulated polystyrene samples had a closed cell content of at least 90%, showing the binder cell structure was also essentially closed cell.

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TABLE A

	Polystyrene	IR Resin Encap PS (25%)	IR Resin Encap PS (35%)
15 Density (#/ft ³)	1.25	1.50	1.75
Thermal Conductivity			
20 BTU/hr/°F/in/ft ²	0.23	0.20	0.19
W/m °C	0.0332	0.0288	0.0274
25 Coefficient Linear Expansion (x 10 ⁻⁶)	80	20	25
30 Closed Cell Content %	90-95	90-95	90-95
Dimensional Stability			
35 Shrinkage (at 80°C)	0.5	<0.5	<0.5
Limiting Oxygen Index (LOI)	17	22	25
40 Compressive Strength (#/in ²)	25	27	29
45 Thermal Stability (Flame Spread ASTM-E-1621)	20-25	10-15	<10
50 Smoke Density (NBS Chamber %)	>10	<10	<10
55 Estimated Cost (per cubic foot)	3.44	3.52	3.59

B. Polystyrene Scrap

For the purpose of further testing the properties of insulation material prepared by the method of this invention, samples were prepared from a phenol-formaldehyde resin and polystyrene board trimmings. The scrap was ground to obtain a mixture of pieces ranging in size from 1/4 to 3/8 inches. The comminuted scrap was combined with the resin in the following proportions by volume. (1) 3 parts resin with 1 part scrap; and (2) 1 part resin with 1 part scrap. Mix (1) was therefore 25% resin before foaming, and Mix (2) 50% resin. A resin composition like Formula A above was used. The molding mixture was charged to molds equipped with dielectric heating means, and molded therein into rectangular blocks, using a molding temperature of approximately 125-150°F. Specimens from each of the mold mixtures were then tested for physical properties. The results are summarized below in Table B, which includes a comparison with a standard commercial polystyrene board. The phenolic resin used was a resole resin.

As shown in Table B, the encapsulated polystyrene samples had a closed cell content of at least 90%, showing the binder cell structure was also essentially closed cell.

TABLE B

	<u>Polystyrene Board</u>	<u>Mix (1) (1:3)</u>	<u>Mix (2) (1:1)</u>
Density ($\#/ft^3$)	1.25	1.55	1.80
Thermal Conductivity (BUT/hr/°F/in/ft ²)	0.23	0.21	0.20
Coefficient Linear Expansion ($\times 10^{-6}$)	80	20	25
Closed Cell Content %	90-95	90-95	90-95
Dimensional Stability Shrinkage (at 80°C)	0.5	<0.5	<0.5
Limiting Oxygen Index (LOI)	17	22	28
Compressive Strength ($\#/in^2$)	25	26	30
Thermal Stability	20-25	10-15	<10
Smoke Density	>10	<10	<10

Claims

1. The method of forming fire retardant insulation material from foam plastic consisting of polystyrene beads, comminuted rigid plastic foam scrap, and mixtures thereof, comprising:
 - 5 (a) preparing a moldable mixture of said foam plastic with heat-foamable thermosetting resin composition, the resin component of said composition being selected from the class consisting of phenol-formaldehyde and melamine-formaldehyde resins, said resin being in resole form and containing a blowing agent and a surfactant, from 5 to 150 parts by volume of said resin being present per 100 parts of said foam plastic in said mix; and
 - 10 (b) applying dielectric heating to portions of said moldable mixture in enclosed molds to obtain integrated molded bodies composed of resin encapsulated beads or scrap pieces, said dielectric heating being effective for rapidly foaming said resin and curing it to a predominately closed cell structure surrounding said beads or scrap pieces.
2. The method of claim 1 in which said material is polystyrene beads and said resin is a phenol-formaldehyde resin, and is employed in an amount of from 10 to 50 parts by volume per 100 parts of said beads.
3. The method of claim 1 in which said material is polystyrene beads and said resin is a melamine-formaldehyde resin, and is employed in an amount of from 10 to 50 parts by volume per 100 parts of said beads.
4. The fire retarding insulating material produced by the methods of claims 1, 2 or 3.
5. The method of claim 1 in which said dielectric heating is at a temperature of about 100 to 150°F and is completed in 10 to 60 seconds.
6. The fire retarding insulating material produced by the method of claim 5 which is further characterized by the cured resin foam thereof having a closed cell content of the order of 90 to 95%.
7. The method of claim 1 in which said foam plastic is polystyrene bead scrap comminuted to pieces having maximum dimensions in the range of 1/8 to 3/4 inches, and said resin is employed in an amount of 10 to 100 parts by volume per 100 parts of said scrap.
8. The method of manufacturing fire retarding insulation material from expandable polystyrene beads containing a heat-activatable expanding agent, comprising:
 - 30 (a) preparing a moldable mixture of said beads with a heat-foamable thermosetting resin composition, the resin component of said composition being selected from the class consisting of phenol-formaldehyde and melamine-formaldehyde resins, said resin being in resole form and containing a blowing agent and a surfactant, from 5 to 75 parts by volume of said resin being present per 100 parts of said polystyrene beads in said mix; and
 - 35 (b) applying dielectric heating to portions of said moldable mixture in enclosed molds to obtain integrated molded bodies composed of resin-encapsulated polystyrene beads, said dielectric heating being effective for rapidly foaming said resin, expanding said beads, and curing the foamed resin to a predominately closed cell structure.
9. The method of claim 8 in which said resin is a phenol-formaldehyde resin, and is employed in an amount of from 10 to 50 parts by volume per 100 parts of said polystyrene beads.
10. The method of claim 8 in which said resin is a melamine-formaldehyde resin, and is employed in an amount of from 10 to 50 parts by volume per 100 parts of said polystyrene beads.
11. The fire retarding insulating material produced by the method of claim 8.
12. The method of claim 8 in which said dielectric heating is at a temperature of about 100 to 150°F and is completed in 10 to 60 seconds.
13. The fire retarding insulating material produced by the method of claim 12 which is further characterized by the cured resin foam thereof having a closed cell content of the order of 90 to 95%.



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application number

EP 86 10 3656

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.4)
X	GB-A-1 601 013 (SOCIETE INDUSTRIELLE ET COMMERCIALE DES CHARBONNAGES) * Claims 1,4,6,11; page 2, lines 27-32; examples 2-6 *	1,2,4-6	C 08 J 9/00 C 08 J 9/22
Y	---	1,2,4-6,8,9,11-13	
Y	FR-A-1 539 978 (B.A.S.F.) * Whole document *	1,2,4-6,8,9,11-13	
A	---	8,10	
A	FR-A-2 248 296 (B.A.S.F.) * Claims; page 4, lines 25-33; examples 1,2 *	1,3	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.4) C 08 J
A	DE-B-1 090 853 (DYNAMIT NOBEL) * Claim; paragraph 3; examples 1,2 *	1-3	
A	DE-A-2 153 550 (AERO COMMERCE) * Claims 1,3; page 2, paragraph 1; page 3, paragraphs 1,3; page 5, paragraph 2; page 7, lines 11-19 *	1,2,7	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 05-11-1986	Examiner HALLEMEESCH A.D.
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			

FIG. 1
PREPARATION
OF MOLDING MIX.

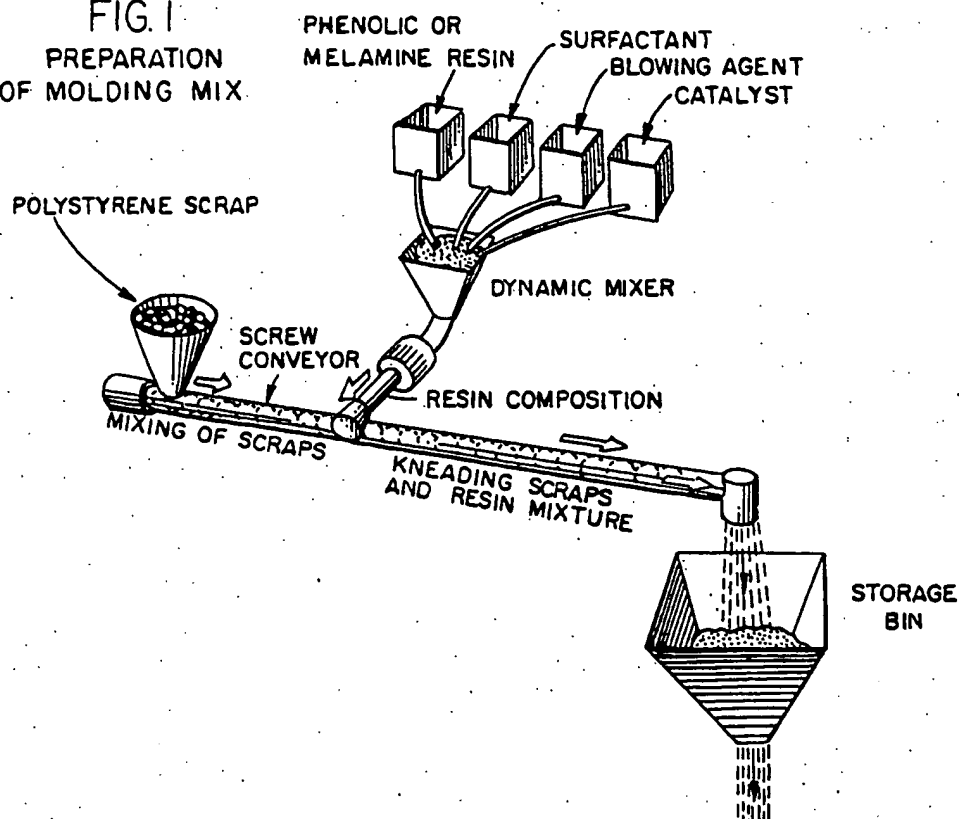


FIG. 2

